

**FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT  
FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET TESTIMONY**

**INTRODUCTION**

President Johnson and Members of City Council, please find below written testimony in support of the First Judicial District's Fiscal Year 2026 Operating Budget.

**DEPARTMENT MISSION & PLANS**

**Mission:** Pursuant to the Pennsylvania Constitution creating the unified judicial system under the authority of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, the courts of the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania (FJD) serve the county and City of Philadelphia.

A strong and independent judiciary is a founding premise of our democratic form of government. Functioning separate and apart from the legislative and executive divisions - the judicial branch is fundamentally responsible for providing an impartial forum for the resolution of disputes, ensuring the rule of law, and the protection of individual rights. The FJD adheres to these principles by guaranteeing access to the court process for all who seek it, by promoting transparency, and by the timely and fair disposition of cases filed.

The judiciary is, by necessity, deliberative. While efficiency of government is laudable, the unique nature of our courts' responsibilities dictates that our primary focus be in taking considered and thoughtful steps to ensure justice, guarantee liberty, resolve disputes, maintain the rule of law, provide equal protection, and ensure due process; thus, formulating the foundation of public trust and confidence in our democracy.

The First Judicial District of Pennsylvania is organized into several divisions. In the Court of Common Pleas there are three divisions: Trial Division (Criminal and Civil Sections), Family Division (Domestic Relations and Juvenile), and the Orphans' Court Division. The Municipal Court includes the Criminal Division, Civil Division, and the Traffic Division. The courts and judges reflect the values of Philadelphia communities and understand the challenges facing the people who appear in its courtrooms. FJD remains committed to fairness, equality, equity, promoting diversification and shortening the distance between the Court and the community.

**Plans for Fiscal Year 2026:**

For FY26, the FJD will continue to collaborate with our various Justice Partners, City departments and State agencies to develop or maintain initiatives that provide services and resources for the community we serve. For example, a main focus for FY26 will be working with the City to address the ongoing mental health crisis and the opioid epidemic in Philadelphia. Along this line, the FJD will continue working with the Administration of Pennsylvania Courts to bring together all Court Counties in a state-wide Mental Health initiative in order to focus efforts in combating the mental health crisis.

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Additionally, the FJD will continue to work with Justice Partners in our many specialty courts, which provides second chances and much needed resources to those in contact with the criminal justice system. The focus of these specialty courts is to reduce recidivism, while making our City safer.

Lastly, the FJD plans to continue the work of developing the Civil Case filing and Management System. This multi-year project will ensure that the case management system is fully secure and accessible to the public and the legal community. Most notably for the various City Departments that rely on the Civil system, such as the Department of Public Property, the City Solicitor, Records and Deeds, and the Sheriff's Department. Additionally, the new system will allow for better access for pro se litigants.

The above-noted programs, collaborations, and projects will continue not only in FY26, but well beyond, into future fiscal years. Along with these initiatives, the FJD remains committed to serving the community of Philadelphia and maintaining the essential services of the court system. As such, the FJD respectfully seeks City Council's consideration and approval of the FY2026 General Fund and Grants Revenue budget.

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### PROPOSED BUDGET OVERVIEW & OTHER BUDGET DRIVERS

General Fund Financial Summary by Class						
	FY24 Original Appropriations	FY24 Actual Obligations	FY25 Original Appropriations	FY25 Estimated Obligations	FY26 Proposed Appropriations	Difference: FY26 Proposed-FY25 Estimated
Class 100 - Employee Compensation	\$116,833,778	\$104,836,174	\$118,482,716	\$122,478,178	\$121,249,647	(\$1,228,531)
Class 200 - Purchase of Services	\$9,875,191	\$21,913,110	\$9,075,191	\$9,225,191	\$9,075,191	(\$150,000)
Class 300/400 - Materials, Supplies & Equipment	\$2,343,461	\$2,343,461	\$2,343,461	\$2,343,461	\$2,343,461	\$0
	<b>\$129,052,430</b>	<b>\$129,092,745</b>	<b>\$129,901,368</b>	<b>\$134,046,830</b>	<b>\$132,668,299</b>	<b>(\$1,378,531)</b>

Contracts Summary (Professional Services only)				
	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25 YTD (Q1 & Q2)
Total amount of contracts	\$5,404,801	\$6,371,960	\$8,416,837	\$4,645,027
Total amount to M/W/DSBE	\$2,175,339	\$2,729,704	\$4,316,686	\$2,341,788
Participation Rate	40%	43%	51%	50%

#### Proposed Funding Request:

The proposed Fiscal Year 2026 General Fund budget totals \$132,668,299, a decrease of \$1,378,531 from Fiscal Year 2025 estimated obligation levels. This decrease is primarily due to one-time bonuses paid in FY25 to union employees.

The proposed budget includes:

- \$121,249,647 in Class 100, a \$1,228,531 decrease from FY25.
- \$9,075,191 in Class 200, a \$150,000 decrease from FY25.
- \$2,343,461 in Class 300/400, level with FY25.

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### STAFFING LEVELS

The FJD is requesting 2,184 budgeted positions for FY26.

\* Please note that the FJD intends to fill critical vacancies throughout FY25 that may impact the budgeted positional count.

Employment Levels (as of November 2024)			
	FY25 Budgeted	Filled as of November 2024	FY26 Proposed
Number of Full-Time Positions	2,149	2,143	2,184
Number of Part-Time Positions	94	63	94
Number of Exempt Positions	2,149	2,143	2,184
Number of Executive Positions (deputy level and above)		88	
Average Salary of All Full-Time Positions		\$60,633	
Median Salary of All Full-Time Positions		\$55,852	

### NEW HIRES

New Hires (from 7/1/2024 to November 2024)						
	Total Number of New Hires	Spanish	Yoruba	Kannada	French	Malayalam
Black or African American	67		1			
Asian	11			1		1
Hispanic or Latino	8	3				
White	69				1	
Other	13					
Total	168	3	1	1	1	1

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**CONTRACTING EXPERIENCE**

N/A